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OF
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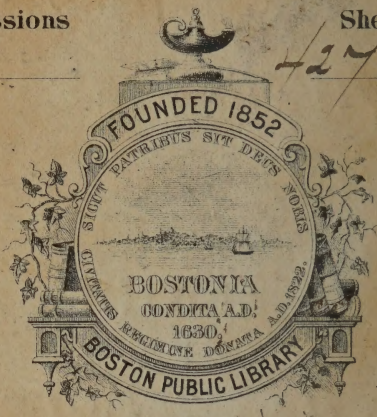

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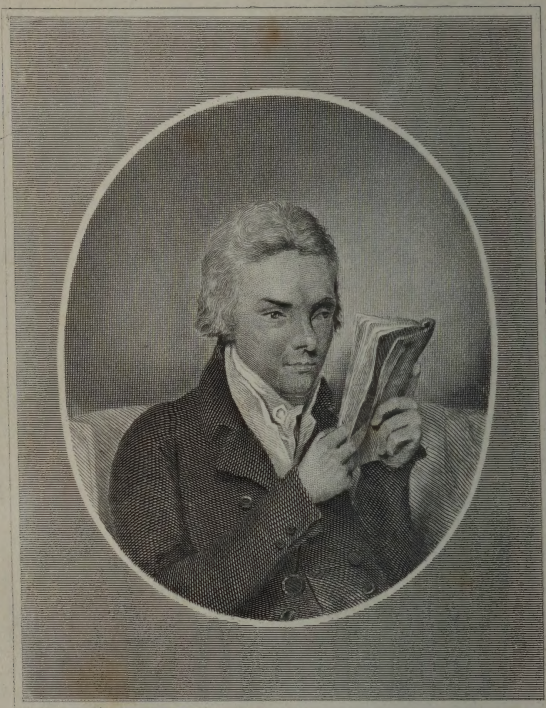

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WILLIAM WILBERFORCE ESQ. M.P.

Known by carrying
a head on his back

MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

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BY THOMAS PRICE.

Second American Edition.

WITH AN

APPENDIX.

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PREFACE

TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

THE following Memoir of one of the most interesting personages who have lived during the current century, first published a few months since in London, is presented by the Publishers to the American community. Eminently conspicuous among this class, for half a century, stood the subject of Mr. Price's Biography—a man, whose memory will be sufficiently distinguished in all coming time, by the extraordinary combination of intellectual and moral power which he directed, and caused to be directed—and that with both a spirit and a success unsurpassed, on the whole, in the world's annals—to the promotion "*of the greatest act of national benefit which God ever put in the power of man to confer on his fellow creatures.*" Such was the language used by Sir Samuel Romilly, in the British Parliament, on occasion of the final passage, by that body, of the Bill for abolishing the African slave-trade throughout the British dominions; and whoever will attentively weigh the vast interest and importance of the great events, now alluded

to, in which Mr. Wilberforce acted a part which has rendered his name immortal, cannot for a moment hesitate to admit that the eloquence of this noble eulogy is but adequate to its truth.

It is proper for the Publishers to state that they have omitted, in the republication of this excellent tribute to the worth of the departed philanthropist, those portions of the Memoir that, while they contributed to swell the volume beyond the size best adapted to the design of popular circulation, were likely, also, by their sectarian and controversial character, to prove of considerably less value, than the more strictly biographical department of the work. It may be read, in its present form, as the Publishers confidently believe—though they would not be understood to assert their own precise accordance with every particular sentiment expressed by the Biographer—with equal pleasure and profit, by persons of every sect, party, and condition.

MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE.

The doctrine of Divine Providence is strikingly illustrated in the history of our world. Amidst the apparent confusion of its affairs, the controlling agency of infinite wisdom and goodness may be traced. There has been an evident subordination in the course of events to some great issue. Complicated and intricate movements, which at first perplexed the most sagacious observers, have ultimately been seen to lend their influence to the advancement of human happiness. The temporary triumph of infidelity has thus been checked, and the faith and hope of the believer have been increasingly justified. Hence much of the value which attaches to the records of the past. History would lose its importance, were it to be regarded as a chronicle

merely of events. Its details might exercise the memory, and afford pleasure to the curious, but a mind intent on the acquisition of moral truth would cease to regard its pages with interest, or to derive from them the materials of its most ennobling speculations.

The superintendence of the Deity has been evinced in the preparation of agents for the execution of his purposes. At different periods in the history of mankind, he has raised up, and qualified with all appropriate endowments, the ministers of his pleasure. They have been brought forward at the precise moment when their services were needed, and a stage has been prepared on which they might efficiently act their part. Outward circumstances have been so adapted to their mental constitution, as to assist them in extending a salutary influence over the men of their day. God has worked with them, confirming their word with signs following.

There is no important era in the history of mankind which does not afford illustrations of this fact. Luther was formed by divine Providence for the work which he accomplished. Whitfield and Wesley were eminently endowed by the Head of the church, for the revival of

religion in their native land; and many of those who, in more recent times, have gone to the land of heathenism, proclaimimg the unsearchable riches of Christ, have manifested an adaptation to their work, in which the devout observer cannot fail to recognize the hand of God. A similar observation may be made respecting the subject of this brief memoir. There was a great work, involving the interests of humanity and religion, to be accomplished; and in the person of Mr. Wilberforce, God furnished an agent eminently fitted for its execution. His integrity commanded the respect of all parties; his talents engaged their attention, and his inflexible determination of purpose won the triumph of his cause. Had not Mr. Wilberforce been a member of the British parliament when the philanthropic Clarkson was endeavoring to stimulate the national conscience, it is not, perhaps, too much to say, that the wrongs of Africa would have been unredressed to this day. Other senators may have raised their voice, but the heart of the nation would not have responded as it did to the appeal of the patriarch of the cause. "To the talent, the sagacity, the discretion, the unwearied perseverance, the mild and conciliatory, though determined tone, the unexceptionable spirit, and the

winning, irresistible eloquence with which he conducted this great cause, as long as health and strength permitted him thus to lead in it, is, no doubt, under God's blessing, mainly to be attributed the triumphant issue to which, after a contest of forty-three years, the whole is now brought."

The ancestors of Mr. Wilberforce were for many years successfully engaged in trade at Hull. His great-great-grandfather was a Mr. William Wilberforce, who was one of the governors of Beverly in the year 1670. The grandson of this gentleman married Sarah, the daughter of Mr. John Thornton, about the year 1711; and hence, we believe, originated that intimate connection with the Thornton family, which continued to the end of Mr. Wilberforce's life. There were two sons and two daughters, the issue of this marriage. William, the eldest son, died without issue in the year 1780. Robert, the younger, married Miss Elizabeth Bird—the aunt, as we believe, of the present Bishops of Winchester and Chester. The late Mr. Wilberforce was the only son of Mr. Robert Wilberforce. There were two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah; the former died unmarried; the latter was twice married, first to the Rev. —— Clarke,

and then to Mr. Stephen, the late master in Chancery.

Mr. Wilberforce was born at Hull, on the 24th of August, 1759, in a house in High Street, and was baptized in Trinity church, of that town, in the following month. His early education was received at the grammar school in Hull, then under the superintendence of the Rev. Joseph Milner, whose preaching appears to have made a deep impression on his youthful mind. What may have been the amount of this impression, it is impossible now to determine. But there is good reason to believe that it was the commencement of that christian character which subsequently appeared in so mature and lovely a form. In itself it was incomplete; but it contained the germ and promise of future good. The integrity and strength of this early impression was severely tried in after life; but, though exhibiting considerable variations, and sometimes reduced, apparently, to the last degree of weakness, it was never permitted to fade away. At the age of twelve, he was removed to a school in the neighborhood of London, where he resided with a pious uncle and aunt, by the latter of whom he was introduced to the venerable John Newton. There must have been something in

his appearance or manners very striking, even at this early age; for Mr. Scott informs us that when, nearly fifteen years after, altered views and revived religious impressions led him (Mr. Wilberforce) again to seek the acquaintance of that excellent man, Mr. Newton surprised and affected him much, by telling him that, from the time of the early introduction just alluded to, he had not failed constantly to pray for him. His residence near London was but temporary. In 1772, he was at a grammar school at Pocklington, Yorkshire, under the care of the Rev. Mr. Baskett. Here he continued till his removal to Cambridge, which took place in 1776 or 1777.

Many serious apprehensions were entertained by his friends, on account of the delicate state of his health. They feared that his frame was too feeble to endure long; more especially, amidst the activity and excitement of a public life. In the year 1788, Dr. Warren, the most eminent physician of his day, declared "he had not stamina enough to last a fortnight." But the good pleasure of his God had ordered otherwise. There was work for him to do; and his bodily strength was, in consequence, daily renewed. The "puny boy," as Mr. Scott designates him

in his funeral sermon, survived to a good old age, and at length retired to rest amid the plaudits of an admiring world. He suffered much through life from his attendance in parliament, yet he continued it from a sense of duty. One who knew him well tells us that few members attended with more assiduity in their places in parliament. Though his frame was always weak, and his health indifferent, he rarely absented himself from public duty: he had, indeed, a higher motive to its discharge than most men. Though singularly destitute of self-importance, he was sensible that he had gradually risen to a peculiar responsibility, which there were few, if any, to share with him. He was regarded, by the religious world, as the protector, in the lower house, of public morals and religious rights. He was justly conscious that this was the highest trust confided to his care, and he was vigilant in proportion. He was never to be found sleeping when any question trenching on public decorum, or the interests of religion, came before the legislature. We believe that this high motive impelled him to a more frequent attendance than consisted with his physical strength. In his later years, he often availed himself of the too frequent opportunity given by a heavy speaker,

to indulge himself with an hour's sleep in the back seats under the galleries; and this indulgence was cheerfully and respectfully conceded by the House. To have disturbed the slumber of Mr. Wilberforce would have been, with one consent, scouted as a breach of privilege, for which no ordinary apology could have atoned.

We have already seen that he was the subject of religious impressions in very early life; and the character which resulted from them, though subject to some variations, assumed more and more of the fixedness and determination of christian principle. We shall have occasion, in the course of our narrative, to notice the fearlessness with which he avowed, and the ability with which he defended religion. It is our province, now, to notice the earlier developments of his piety, the first manifestations of the grace which was given him. "I have been favored," says Mr. Scott, "with the sight of several letters written by him from this place, which, amidst all the vivacity and playfulness belonging to his years and his character, discover a serious and feeling sense of religion, and even a distinct insight into the leading doctrines of christianity. He alludes repeatedly to the preaching of Mr. Milner, of which he evidently retained a very pleasing re-

collection, and on which he says he should rejoice again to attend: he takes a lively interest in the success of Mr. Milner's labors, and those of other pious ministers; expresses much aversion to the theatre, and deprecates being compelled to attend its exhibitions: but, on the whole, is well content with all that might befall him, believing that it would work for his good.

"On his removal to Cambridge, or even before that time, he appears to have fallen under the direction of persons who much feared his being too serious, and who were willing even to risk making him dissipated, rather than allow him to be more religious than the world approves; and, under this influence, he made not that use of his time at the University which he would afterwards have wished that he had done.

"I have the best authority, however, for saying, that his conduct *never was vicious.* That he always possessed and cultivated a literary taste, it would be superfluous to state: but, after he became decidedly religious, he conscientiously and diligently applied himself to all those studies which become a christian gentleman and a legislator, that he might consecrate his talents, thus improved to the utmost, to the glory of God, and the good of his fellow creatures."

Mr. Wilberforce entered as a fellow-commoner at St. John's College, where he formed an intimacy with Mr. Pitt, which remained unbroken till the close of that statesman's life, in 1806. He did not obtain any academical honors, such being very rarely sought at that time by young men of his standing; but his attainments were highly respectable, and his classical taste acknowledged. In 1781, he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and that of Master in 1788.

In the year 1780, when he had just attained his majority, he was chosen to represent his native town in parliament; an honor which appears to have been unsolicited on his part, but which could not fail to yield him very high gratification. Thus an appropriate sphere for the exercise of his talents was unexpectedly supplied; and an opportunity of preparation was given, for the great work of his life. The guidance of Divine Providence, in this event, is now recognized by the devout observer with joy and gratitude.

His name first occurs in the Parliamentary Journals in the year 1781, as one of the commissioners for administering the oaths to members; but he does not appear to have taken any active part in the business of the house till

1783, when he seconded an address of thanks on the peace, and warmly opposed Mr. Fox's India bill. In the year 1784, on the summary dismissal of the coalition administration, he was re-elected for Hull, in opposition to Mr. David Hartley, an eminent partisan of Mr. Fox; but immediately resigned its representation, on being chosen for the county of York, for which he continued to sit in six successive parliaments, till he voluntarily surrendered the honor in 1812, on account of increasing infirmities. In the year 1808, his return was warmly contested; but, such was the admiration in which his character was held, and the value put upon his services, that the expenses of his election, though exceeding £100,000, were far more than met by voluntary subscriptions.

Two years after, in 1786, he succeeded in carrying through the Commons a Bill for the Amendment of our Criminal Code, the principal object of which was, to give certainty to punishment; but, being opposed by Lord Chancellor Loughborough, it was rejected in the upper house without a division. If we may judge from the comments of the chancellor, it reflected more credit on the heart, than on the legal dexterity of Mr. Wilberforce.

In the early part of his parliamentary career, his style of oratory appears to have partaken of severer and more caustic qualities than at a later period. "It is instructive to observe," remarks a writer well acquainted with Mr. Wilberforce, "the early parliamentary career of this great man. If there ever was a being gifted with more than human kindness, it was Mr. Wilberforce. His tone, his manners, his look, were all conciliatory, even to persuasive tenderness; yet we have already seen him reproved for undue severity by Fox, and we next find him tutored in meekness by Pitt! In 1787, in a debate on the commercial relations with France, Burke had provoked Mr. Wilberforce into some acrimony of retort, when Mr. Pitt checked him for his imprudence, telling him that 'it was as far beyond his powers as his wishes, to contend with such an opponent as Burke, in abuse and personality.'"

It is easily to be believed, that his religious character was severely tried in the earliest period of his parliamentary life. His society was courted by the leading men of his day, and the associations into which he was consequently brought, proved unfriendly to the growth of his christian principles. Being introduced to the political

clubs of London, his character was tested, and there is reason to suppose that its religious tone was somewhat lowered. He was surrounded by men of secular ambition, and we need not wonder if the unsuspecting confidence of youth exposed him to serious injury. Political pursuits have ever been pregnant with danger to religious principles. But, at the period to which we now refer, they possessed an absorbing power, which increased a thousand fold their means of evil. Party politics were at their height. The atmosphere of Europe was charged with the elements of disorder and ruin. The most sagacious statesmen were perplexed by the signs of the times; and all men were preparing, in fearful mood, for that mighty struggle which was to shake the fabric of European society, and to give to its character and prospects an entirely different aspect. That the youthful mind of Mr. Wilberforce should so far have been stimulated by the absorbing influences of this period, as to be "drawn away from God, and turned aside to vanity," may excite our regret, but cannot awaken surprise. It needed all the determination of a matured christian to withstand the evil influences by which he was surrounded.

But we have reason to adore the Father of mercies, that his gracious interposition arrested the progress of the evil; thus preserving, to the cause of humanity and christian truth, one of its most consistent and successful advocates. It is interesting to observe the means which were employed for the recovery of such a mind from its spiritual torpor. The tendency of its associations was not only to perpetuate, but to increase the evil. When religious sensibility is impaired—when the heart ceases to reply with cheerfulness and promptitude to the calls of piety—there is much reason to fear lest, for its own protection from distracting thoughts, it should plunge into the arms of dissipation or infidelity. Thousands have sought refuge from themselves by adopting so fearful an alternative; but the watchful eye of Infinite Benevolence was upon Mr. Wilberforce, and the intercourse of friendship was speedily sanctified to the religious renovation of his heart.

"In the latter part of the year 1784, and again in 1785," says Mr. Scott, "Mr. Wilberforce travelled on the continent with a party of friends. The late Dean of Carlisle, Dr. Isaac Milner, was his companion in the same carriage: and here these highly gifted friends discussed

various interesting topics together. Religion was of the number: and, on one occasion, Mr. Wilberforce having expressed respect for a pious clergyman, added, that he 'carried things too far.' His friend pressed him upon this point. 'What did he mean by carrying things too far, or being too strict? On what ground did he pronounce this to be the case? When we talk of going *too far*, some *standard* must necessarily be referred to: was the standard of scripture exceeded? or could any other standard be satisfactorily adopted and maintained? Perhaps it would not easily be shown that, where things were carried, as it was alleged, *too far*, they were not carried beyond the rules of scripture, but only beyond what was usually practised and approved among men.'

"Mr. Wilberforce, when thus pressed by his friend, endeavored to explain and defend his position as well as he could: but he was dissatisfied himself with what he had to offer; in short, he felt that his own notions on the subject were vague and untenable. A lodgment was thus made in his conscience; matter for serious thinking was suggested; and his thoughts could find no rest till they found it from the word of God, and the adoption of a scriptural standard,

by which to form all his judgments, and regulate all his conduct.

"Another incident in the history of his mind at this period, as related by himself, is not less interesting and instructive than the preceding. 'As I read,' said he, 'the promises of holy scripture—"Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; God will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him; Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest; I will take away the heart of stone, and give you the heart of flesh; I will put my laws in your hearts, and write them in your inward parts; I will be merciful unto their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"—as I read these passages, it occured to me to reflect—If these things be so—if there be any truth in all this—and if I set myself to seek the blessings thus promised—I shall certainly find a sensible effect and change wrought within me, such as is thus described. I will put the matter to the proof: I will try the experiment: I will seek, that I may find the promised blessings.' He did so; and the result was peace, and liberty, and victory—peace of conscience, and purified affections; deliverance from those sins which had

ensnared him, or held him in bondage; 'the victory that overcometh the world,' and boldness 'to confess Christ before men.' 'He had the witness in himself;' a sensible evidence, both that the word of God is true, and that he had not in vain sought the fulfilment of its promises to himself."

Happy would it be for mankind, if they could be induced to make a similar trial. The word of God is the instrument of regeneration. It is the incorruptible seed, by which we are born again; the word of truth, by which God of his own will hath begotten us. Its efficiency has been proved in ten thousand cases; and whenever, in future times, the inquiring and anxious mind shall turn to its pages, and devoutly seek to imbibe its spirit, it will infallibly transmit to his heart an influence which shall make him a new creature in Jesus Christ. It is admirably adapted to the renovation of man's moral nature. As an instrument, it is perfect; let it then be employed aright, and the happiest effects must follow.

With the feelings which resulted from these searchings of heart, Mr. Wilberforce once more sought the acquaintance of Mr. Newton, and, in the winter of 1785–6, at his earnest recom-

mendation, began to attend the ministry of the Rev. Thomas Scott, at the Lock Hospital. "This was a period of my life," says the subject of our memoir, "when it was peculiarly important to me habitually to attend the ministrations of a sound and faithful pastor; and I willingly assented to Mr. Newton's earnest recommendations of Mr. Scott. I soon found that he fully equalled the strongest expectations that I had formed of him, and from that time for many years I attended him regularly, for the most part accompanied by my dear friends—both, alas! now gone to a better world—the Hon. Edward James Eliot, and Mr. Henry Thornton. We used to hear him at the Lock in the morning; Mr. Thornton and I often gladly following him for the afternoon service into the city, where he had the lectureship of Bread Street church. All objections arising from an unfavorable manner were at once overruled by the strong sense, the extensive acquaintance with scripture, the accurate knowledge of the human heart, and the vehement and powerful appeals to the conscience, with which all his sermons abounded, in a greater degree than those of any other minister I ever attended. Indeed, the substantial solidity of his discourses made those of ordinary clergymen,

though good and able men, appear comparatively somewhat superficial and defective in matter."

Some of his friends now recommended his retirement from public life, but others, with much more wisdom and fidelity to the cause of God, urged him to retain the station which Providence had assigned him. Happily for the interests of humanity, Mr. Wilberforce adopted the advice of the latter. "I feel a sort of self-congratulation, at present," said the Rev. Thomas Scott, in 1807, "that, about twenty years ago, I withstood, with all my energy, Mr. ——'s counsel, who advised Mr. Wilberforce to retire from public life. Had that counsel been followed, the slave-trade might have continued to future generations."

Our country was first implicated in the African slave-trade in the reign of Elizabeth. Sir John Hawkins possesses the unenviable distinction of having been the first Englishman who engaged in it. This occurred in the year 1562. He deceived his royal mistress, by representing the Africans as voluntary laborers. The queen is stated to have expressed her deep concern lest any of the negroes should be forced from their country, declaring "it would be detestable, and call down the vengeance of Heaven upon the undertakers." A large number of vessels annu-

ally sailed from this country, taking with them fire-arms, intoxicating liquors, and other articles of trifling value, which they exchanged for slaves. This traffic continued, without exciting much attention from the moral part of the community, till the middle of the last century. The society of Friends were among its earliest opponents; and by their untiring efforts for its abolition, have entitled themselves to the esteem and gratitude of mankind. So early as the year 1727, they passed a resolution, at their annual meeting, declaring "that the importing of negroes from their native country and relations, by Friends, is not a commendable nor allowed practice, and is therefore censured by this meeting." In 1758, they proceeded farther, warning all in connexion with them, that they carefully avoid being in any way concerned in reaping the unrighteous profits arising from it." At length, in 1761, they determined to disown all such as engaged in it; thus furnishing an example to Christendom, which redounds to the honor of our common faith.

But the efforts of the Quakers, though honorable to themselves, and efficient in reference to their own members, failed to make any extensive impression on the nation. This, however, was

accomplished by the labors of Mr. Granville Sharp, one of those enlightened philanthropists, who break the continuity of human selfishness and crime, and attach a character of distinguished honor to the age in which they live.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, the planters and merchants were accustomed to bring slaves from the colonies in the capacity of servants, and subsequently, to return them at their pleasure to the West Indies. A notion became extensively prevalent among this class, that the English law did not sanction their masters in returning them to bondage, if they had submitted, during their residence in England, to the christian rite of baptism. They consequently solicited, with much importunity, the performance of this rite; and having obtained its administration, they absconded. This state of things involved the planters and merchants in much perplexity, and induced them, in 1729, to solicit the opinion of York and Talbot, the attorney and solicitor general. This opinion was unfavorable to the negroes, and they were, in consequence, seized, and openly forced on board the vessels which were destined to convey them to the land of slavery. Public feeling was thus outraged, and the means of deliverance

for the oppressed unexpectedly prepared. Mr. Sharp took an active part in the struggles of that period. He first appeared before the public as the friend of the African, in the case of Jonathan Strong, who was brought to England in 1765. This slave, having been barbarously used by his master, Mr. David Lisle, became so emaciated by ague, fever and lameness, as to be utterly useless, and was, consequently, permitted to go whither he pleased, in order that the expense of his maintenance might be avoided. In this miserable condition, he applied to Mr. William Sharp, brother of Mr. Granville Sharp, for medical advice, under whose benevolent and skilful care he was restored to health. During his recovery, he was supplied with money by Mr. Granville Sharp, who afterwards procured him a situation. Here his master saw him, and determined on repossessing him. For this purpose, he caused him to be seized by some of the city officers, who conveyed him, without a warrant, to the Poultry Compter, where he was sold to John Kerr, for thirty pounds. "In this situation," Mr. Clarkson tells us, in his History of the Abolition, "Strong sent, as was usual, to his godfathers, John London and Stephen Nail, for their protection. They went, but were refused

admittance to him. At length, he sent for Mr. Granville Sharp. The latter went, but they still refused admission to the prisoner. He insisted, however, upon seeing him, and charged the keeper of the prison at his peril, to deliver him up till he had been carried before a magistrate.

"Mr. Sharp, immediately upon this, waited upon Sir Robert Kite, then lord mayor, and entreated him to send for Strong, and to hear his case. A day was accordingly appointed. Mr. Sharp attended, and also William M'Bean, a notary public, and David Laird, captain of the ship Thames, which was to have conveyed Strong to Jamaica, in behalf of the purchaser, John Kerr. A long conversation ensued, in which the opinion of York and Talbot was quoted. Mr. Sharp made his observations. Certain lawyers, who were present, seemed to be staggered at the case, but inclined rather to recommit the prisoner. The lord mayor, however, discharged Strong, as he had been taken up without a warrant.

"As soon as this determination was made known, the parties began to move off. Captain Laird, however, who kept close to Strong, laid hold of him before he had quitted the room, and said aloud, 'Then I now seize him as my slave.' Upon this, Mr. Sharp put his hand upon Laird's

shoulder, and pronounced these words; 'I charge you, in the name of the king, with an assault upon the person of Jonathan Strong, and all these are my witnesses.' Laird was greatly intimidated by this charge, made in the presence of the lord mayor and others, and fearing a prosecution, let his prisoner go, leaving him to be conveyed away by Mr. Sharp."

Several other cases of a similar nature subsequently occurred, in all of which Mr. Sharp took a prominent part. But the legal question was yet unsettled. No broad principle, to which the future protection of the African might be entrusted, had been admitted; and it was, therefore, determined, in the case of James Somerset, to try the general question, "Whether a slave, by coming into England, became free." In order that the law might be fully ascertained, the case was argued at three different sittings, in 1772, and the pleadings submitted to the opinion of the judges. The result of the trial is well known. To the honor of the British constitution, it was declared—*That as soon as ever any slave set his foot on English territory, he became free.* This was an important and influential step. It contained the germ of subsequent measures, and

gave promise to outraged humanity of more complete vindication.

From this period, public attention was increasingly drawn to the question. It became the topic of general conversation. Its nature was inquired into, and a conviction, perpetually deepening, of its inhuman and diabolical character, was obtained. The public abhorrence was greatly strengthened by a circumstance which occurred in 1783.

"In this year, certain underwriters desired to be heard against Gregson and others, of Liverpool, in the case of the ship Zong, Captain Collingwood, alleging that the captain and officers of the said vessel threw overboard one hundred and thirty-two slaves alive into the sea, in order to defraud them, by claiming the value of the said slaves, as if they had been lost in a natural way. In the course of the trial, which afterwards came on, it appeared that the slaves on board the Zong were very sickly; that sixty of them had already died, and several were ill, and likely to die—when the Captain proposed to James Kelsall, the mate, and others, to throw several of them overboard, stating 'that if they died a natural death, the loss would fall upon the owners of the ship, but that if they were thrown

into the sea, it would fall upon the underwriters.' He selected, accordingly, one hundred and thirty-two of the most sickly of the slaves. Fifty-four of these were immediately thrown overboard, and forty-two were made to be partakers of their fate on the succeeding day. In the course of three days afterwards, the remaining twenty-six were brought upon deck, to complete the number of victims. The first sixteen submitted to be thrown into the sea, but the rest, with a noble resolution, would not suffer the officers to touch them, but leaped after their companions, and shared their fate!

"The plea which was set up in behalf of this atrocious and unparalleled act of wickedness was, that the captain discovered, when he made the proposal, that he had only two hundred gallons of water on board, and that he had missed his port. It was proved, however, in answer to this, that no one had been put upon short allowance, and that, as if Providence had determined to afford an unequivocal proof of the guilt, a shower of rain fell, and continued for three days, immediately after the second lot of slaves had been destroyed, by means of which they might have filled many of their vessels* with water,

* It appeared that they filled six.

and thus have prevented all necessity for the destruction of the third.

"Mr. Sharp was present at this trial, and procured the attendance of a short-hand writer, to take down the facts which should come out in the course of it. These he gave to the public afterwards. He communicated them also, with a copy of the trial, to the Lords of the Admiralty, as the guardians of justice upon the seas, and to the duke of Portland, as principal minister of state. No notice, however, was taken by any of these, of the information which had been thus sent them.

"But though nothing was done by the persons then in power, in consequence of the murder of so many innocent individuals, yet the publication of an account of it by Mr. Sharp, in the newspapers, made such an impression upon others, that new coadjutors rose up."

Two years after this, in 1785, Mr. Thomas Clarkson directed his attention to this subject, and the result of his inquiries was an entire dedication of himself to the interests of humanity. In that year, Dr. Peckhard, the vice-chancellor of Cambridge, proposed to the senior bachelors in arts the following question, as the subject for a Latin dissertation:—"Is it right to make slaves

of others against their will?" Mr. Clarkson was at this time of the order of senior bachelors, and, having the previous year obtained the prize for the best Latin dissertation, a regard to his own reputation led him to try for it again. He at once perceived that the question had a direct bearing on the African slave-trade, and proceeded to London, to obtain information respecting the manner in which this traffic was conducted. Hitherto he had felt no interest in the question itself. His only concern was to maintain and extend his reputation in the university. But in the course of his reading, his mind underwent an entire revolution. The atrocities which were systematically practised on the African coast, harrowed up his soul, and induced a degree of feeling scarcely compatible with the calm discharge of his duties. Hir own account of the state of his mind at this period, is eminently beautiful and touching.

"Furnished then in this manner," he says, "I began my work. But no person can tell the severe trial which the writing of it proved to me. I had expected pleasure from the invention of the arguments, from the arrangement of them, from the putting of them together, and from the thought, in the interim, that I was engaged in

an innocent contest for literary honor. But all my pleasure was damped by the facts which were now continually before me. It was but one gloomy subject, from morning to night. In the day-time I was uneasy; in the night I had little rest. I sometimes never closed my eyelids for grief. It became now not so much a trial for academical reputation, as for the production of a work which might be useful to injured Africa. And keeping this idea in my mind ever after the perusal of Benezet, I always slept with a candle in my room, that I might rise out of bed, and put down such thoughts as might occur to me in the night, if I judged them valuable, conceiving that no arguments of any moment should be lost in so great a cause. Having at length finished this painful task, I sent my essay to the vice-chancellor, and soon afterwards found myself honored, as before, with the first prize.

"As it is usual to read these essays publicly in the senate-house, soon after the prize is adjudged, I was called to Cambridge for this purpose. I went, and performed my office. On returning, however, to London, the subject of it almost wholly engrossed my thoughts. I became, at times, very seriously affected while upon the road. I stopped my horse occasionally, and

dismounted and walked. I frequently tried to persuade myself, in these intervals, that the contents of my essay could not be true. The more, however, I reflected upon them, or rather upon the authorities on which they were founded, the more I gave them credit. Coming in sight of Wade's Mill, in Hertfordshire, I sat down disconsolate on the turf by the road-side, and held my horse. Here, a thought came into my mind, that if the contents of the essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to their end. Agitated in this manner, I reached home. This was in the summer of 1785.

"In the course of the autumn of the same year, I experienced similar impressions. I walked frequently into the woods, that I might think on the subject in solitude, and find relief to my mind there. But there the question still recurred, 'Are these things true?' Still the answer followed as instantaneously, 'They are.' Still the result accompanied it—'Then, surely, some person should interfere.' I then began to envy those who had seats in parliament, and who had great riches, and widely-extended connections, which would enable them to take up this cause. Finding scarcely any one at that time who thought of it, I was turned frequently to myself.

But here many difficulties arose. It struck me, among others, that a young man of only twenty-four years of age would not have that solid judgment, or knowledge of men, manners and things, which were requisite to qualify him to undertake a task of such magnitude and importance:—and with whom was I to unite? I believed, also, that it looked so much like one of the feigned labors of Hercules, that my understanding would be suspected, if I proposed it. On ruminating, however, on the subject, I found one thing, at least, practicable, and that this, also, was in my power. I could translate my Latin dissertation. I could enlarge it usefully. I could see how the public received it, or how far they were likely to favor any serious measures, which should have a tendency to produce the abolition of the slave-trade. Upon this, then, I determined; and, in the middle of the month of November, 1785, I began my work."

Mr. Clarkson was now too deeply interested in the subject to return to his ordinary occupations. He determined on the translation of his essay, sought an interview with Mr. G. Sharp, and ultimately resolved on abandoning the Church, in which he had fair prospects of preferment, and devoting himself entirely to the cause of the

Africans. From this period, he occupied himself in calling on the leading members of the two houses of parliament, in obtaining additional information, and in circulating such works as were suited to enlighten and arouse the public mind. Among other persons, he called on Mr. Wilberforce, then in the morning of his day. Little did Mr. Clarkson imagine that the young senator whom he visited was destined to act so distinguished and praiseworthy a part in the great struggle which was commencing. The designs of Providence were yet unrevealed; but now that the result is known, and the course of Mr. Wilberforce so honorably closed, it cannot be uninteresting to learn the reception which he gave to this sacred cause, on its being first submitted to his attention.

"On my first interview with him," says Mr. Clarkson, "he stated frankly that the subject had often employed his thoughts, and that it was near his heart. He seemed earnest about it, and also very desirous of taking the trouble of inquiring further into it. Having read my book, which I had delivered to him in person, he sent for me. He expressed a wish that I would make him acquainted with some of my authorities for the assertions in it, which I did afterwards, to his sat-

isfaction. He asked me if I could support it by any other evidence. I told him I could; I mentioned Mr. Newton, Mr. Nisbett, and several others to him. He took the trouble of sending for all these. He made memorandums of their conversation, and, sending for me afterwards, showed them to me. On learning my intention to devote myself to the cause, he paid me many handsome compliments. He then desired me to call on him often, and to acquaint him with my progress from time to time. He expressed, also, his willingness to afford me any assistance in his power, in the prosecution of my pursuits."

In the course of Mr. Clarkson's visits to Mr. Wilberforce, the latter manifested an increasing interest in the subject of their conference. His strong mind readily yielded to the force of evidence, and its convictions were aided by the promptings of a generous heart. Occasional meetings of the friends of abolition were held at his house, and measures were there concerted for the accomplishment of their design. At length, on the 22d of May, 1787, a committee was formed for the adoption of such measures as were calculated to effect the abolition of the slave-trade, and Mr. Wilberforce became their parliamentary leader. Those who have witnessed

the recent feelings of the nation on this subject, may imagine that but little moral courage was required for the adoption of the course which Mr. Wilberforce took. But the state of things was then totally different from what we have lately seen. The atrocities of the system were not known; the moral sensibilities of the nation were blunted, and a numerous, affluent, and unprincipled party was pledged to opposition. It was at this risk of party associations and of personal friendships, that he determined on his course; and the virulence with which he was assailed, and the foul aspersions which were cast on his unspotted fame, bespoke the fear which his talents and virtues had excited. The nation, though but little informed, and still less interested, in this great question, was yet in advance of the house of commons. The first petition presented to that house was from the Quakers, in 1783; the second was from Bridgewater, in 1785, and its reception was most discouraging. "There did not appear," say the members for Bridgewater, in a joint letter which they addressed to their constituents, "the least disposition to pay any further attention to it. Every one, almost, says that the abolition of the slave-trade must immediately throw the West India

Islands into convulsions, and soon complete their utter ruin."

Under these circumstances, Mr. Wilberforce gave notice, early in 1788, of his intention to bring the subject before the legislature; but being prevented from doing so by indisposition, Mr. Pitt, on the 9th of May, introduced and carried the following resolution:—"That this house will, early in the next session of parliament, proceed to take into consideration the circumstance of the slave-trade, complained of in the said petition, and what may be fit to be done thereupon." In the course of the discussion on this motion, Mr. Fox complained of the ignorance in which Mr. Pitt had left the house respecting his own views, and of the delay which his proposition involved, declaring that, for himself, he had no scruple about asserting, at the outset, that the slave-trade ought not to be regulated, but destroyed. To this opinion he said his mind was made up; and he was persuaded that the more the subject was considered, the more his view of it would gain ground: and it would be admitted, that to consider it in any other manner, or on any other principles than those of humanity and justice, would be idle and absurd. It is interesting to observe these two great men, who divided

the admiration and confidence of political parties, and who were usually ranged on opposite sides of the question in debate, concurring in the future stages of this benevolent measure. Mr. Pitt's official character imposed at first some restraint upon him; but he continued, throughout the prolonged agitation of the question, its consistent and able, though unsuccessful advocate. Many of his colleagues, it is well known, were violently opposed to his views, nor did they attempt to conceal their opposition. Lord Chancellor Thurlow, Lord Liverpool, and Mr. Dundas frequently opposed him in parliament, and were supported, there is reason to believe, by a higher and more influential personage than themselves. This state of things prevented Mr. Pitt from making the *abolition* a cabinet measure, and insured, in consequence, its frequent rejection. His personal influence was unable to triumph over the powerful opposition arrayed against it. Mr. Fox, on the other hand, was unfettered by office, and, therefore, spoke and acted according to the promptings of his generous nature. And when, on the death of Mr. Pitt, he succeeded to the premiership, he proved his own sincerity, and the political rectitude of his party, by making the abolition a ministerial question.

In the discussion of this subject which ensued in parliament, on the 12th of May, Mr. Wilberforce distinguished himself by a very able and animated speech, in the course of which he advanced the following propositions, deduced from the Privy Council Report, and intended as subject of future remark:

"1. That the number of slaves annually carried from the coast of Africa, in British vessels, was about 38,000, of which, on an average, 22,500 were carried to the British islands; and that of the latter, only 17,500 were retained there.

"2. That these slaves, according to the evidence on the table, consisted, first, of prisoners of war; secondly, of free persons sold for debt, or on account of real or imputed crimes, particularly adultery and witchcraft—in which cases they were frequently sold with their whole families, and sometimes for the profit of those by whom they were condemned; thirdly, of domestic slaves sold for the profit of their masters, in some places at the will of the masters, and in others, on being condemned by them for real or imputed crimes; fourthly, of persons made slaves by various acts of oppression, violence, or fraud, committed either by the princes and chiefs of those countries on their subjects, or by private

individuals on each other; or lastly, by Europeans engaged in this traffic.

"3. That the trade so carried on had, necessarily, a tendency to occasion frequent and cruel wars among the natives, to produce unjust convictions and punishments for pretended or aggravated crimes, to encourage acts of oppression, violence and fraud, and to obstruct the natural course of civilization and improvement in those countries.

"4. That Africa in its present state furnished several valuable articles of commerce, which were partly peculiar to itself, but that it was adapted to the production of others, with which we were now either wholly or in great part supplied by foreign nations. That an extensive commerce with Africa might be substituted in these commodities, so as to afford a return for as many articles as had annually been carried thither in British vessels: and lastly, that such a commerce might reasonably be expected to increase by the progress of civilization there.

"5. That the slave-trade was peculiarly destructive to the seamen employed in it; and that the mortality there had been much greater than in any British vessels employed upon the same coast in any other service or trade.

"6. That the mode of transporting the slaves from Africa to the West Indies necessarily exposed them to many and grievous sufferings, for which no regulations could provide an adequate remedy; and that in consequence thereof, a large proportion had annually perished during the voyage.

"7. That a large proportion had also perished in the harbors in the West Indies, from the diseases contracted in the voyage and the treatment of the same, previously to their being sold, and that this loss amounted to four and a half per cent of the imported slaves.

"8. That the loss of the newly imported slaves, within the three first years after their importation, bore a large proportion to the whole number imported.

"9. That the natural increase of population among the slaves in the islands, appeared to have been impeded principally by the following causes: First, by the inequality of the sexes in the importations from Africa. Secondly, by the general dissoluteness of manners among the slaves, and the want of proper regulations for the encouragement of marriages, and of rearing children among them. Thirdly, by the particular diseases which were prevalent among them, and which

were in some instances to be attributed to too severe labor, or rigorous treatment, and in others to insufficient or improper food. Fourthly, by those diseases which affected a large proportion of negro children in their infancy, and by those to which the negroes newly imported from Africa had been found to be peculiarly liable.

"10. That the whole number of the slaves in the island of Jamaica, in 1768, was about 167,000; in 1774, about 193,000, and in 1787, about 256,000: that by comparing these numbers with the numbers imported and retained in the said island during all these years, and making proper allowances, the annual excess of deaths above births was in the proportion of about seven eighths per cent; that in the first six years of this period, it was in the proportion of rather more than one on every hundred, that in the last thirteen years of the same, it was in the proportion of about three fifths on every hundred, and that a number of slaves, amounting to fifteen thousand, perished during the latter period, in consequence of repeated hurricanes, and of the want of foreign supplies of provisions.

"11. That the whole number of slaves in the island of Barbadoes was, in the year 1764, about 70,706; in 1774, about 74,874; in 1780, about

68,270; in 1781, after the hurricane, about 63,248; and in 1786, about 62,115: that by comparing these numbers with the number imported into the island, (not allowing for any re-exportation,) the annual excess of deaths above births in ten years, from 1764 to 1774, was in the proportion of about five on every hundred; that in the seven years from 1774 to 1780, it was in the proportion of about one and one third on every hundred; that between the years 1780 and 1781, there had been a decrease in the number of slaves of about five thousand; that in the six years from 1781 to 1786, the excess of deaths was in the proportion of rather less than seven eighths on every hundred; that in the four years from 1783 to 1786, it was in the proportion of rather less than one third on every hundred; and that during the whole period, there was no doubt that some had been exported from the island, but considerably more in the first part of this period than in the last.

"12. That the accounts from the Leeward Islands, from Dominica, Grenada, and St. Vincent's, did not furnish sufficient grounds for comparing the state of population in the said islands, at different periods, with the number of slaves which had been from time to time imported

there and exported therefrom; but that from the evidence which had been received respecting the present state of these islands, as well as that of Jamaica and Barbadoes, and from a consideration of the means of obviating the causes which had hitherto operated to impede the natural increase of the slaves, and of lessening the demand for manual labor, without diminishing the profit of the planters, no considerable or permanent inconvenience would result from discontinuing the further importation of African slaves."

The debate was renewed on the 25th, when the further consideration of the subject was deferred till the following session. In 1790, the clamor for further evidence prevailed, and no progress was made. In 1791, Mr. Wilberforce was again at his post; but his motion, though supported by the eloquence of Fox and Pitt, was lost by a majority of 75. Undaunted by these repeated failures, he renewed his efforts on the 3d of April, 1792; and though opposed by all the rancor and sophistry which the advocates of an inhuman system could display, a motion for the gradual abolition of the traffic was carried through the house. The merit of proposing gradual measures in a case of unparalleled injustice and cruelty, belonged to Mr. Dundas, after-

wards Lord Melville. The insincerity of the proposition was soon made apparent; for those who were most clamorous in its support, were foremost to oppose its taking effect. They only wanted to divert, if possible, public attention from the subject, or at least, to afford an opportunity for its excitement to subside. Happily, the principles of justice were too deeply seated in the breast of the nation to allow of their success. The triumph of humanity was delayed for a season, but its victory was ultimately more signal.

The speech of Mr. Wilberforce, on this occasion, was every way worthy of his cause. It manifested an intimate acquaintance with the facts of the case, a heart in perfect harmony with the principles of justice, a benevolence as enlightened as it was pure, and an indignation as intense as it was free from acrimony.

"The debate on this occasion," says the author of 'Public Characters,' writing in 1801, "was perhaps the most eloquent and interesting that was ever witnessed in the British senate. The want of success hitherto seemed to have awakened all the energies, and to have roused every honorable feeling, of which the human heart is capable.

"Evils, said Mr. Wilberforce, "were conspicuous everywhere in this trade. Never was there indeed a system so replete with wickedness and cruelty. To whatever part of it we turn our eyes, whether to Africa, the Middle Passage, or the West Indies, we can find no comfort, no satisfaction, no relief. It was the gracious ordinance of Providence, both in the natural and moral world, that good should often arise out of evil. Hurricanes cleared the air; and the propagation of truth was promoted by persecution. Pride, vanity and profusion contributed often, in their remoter consequences, to the happiness of mankind. In common, what was in itself evil and vicious, was permitted to carry along with it some circumstances of palliation. The Arab was hospitable; the robber brave. We did not necessarily find cruelty associated with fraud, or meanness with injustice. But here the case was far otherwise. It was the prerogative of this detested traffic to separate from evil its concomitant good, and to reconcile discordant mischiefs. It robbed war of its generosity; it deprived peace of its security; we saw in it the vices of polished society, without its knowledge or its comforts, and the evils of barbarism, without its simplicity. No age, no sex, no rank, no condi-

tion, was exempt from the fatal influence of this wide-wasting calamity. Thus it attained to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness; and, scorning all competition and comparison, it stood, without a rival, in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable pre-eminence."

An attempt was made, on the 25th of April, to alter the period of the abolition from the 1st of January, 1800, to the 1st of January, 1793. This proposition was negatived by a majority of 47; but, by a compromise, the time was subsequently fixed for the 1st of January, 1796. The bill, however, was lost in the upper house.

In 1794, 1795, 1796, 1798, and 1799, Mr. Wilberforce renewed his efforts, but without success. The house appeared to grow weary of the discussion, and the country at large to have lost somewhat of its former zeal and vigor. The indefatigable Clarkson was compelled, by an enfeebled frame, to remit his exertions. Everything depended, at this crisis, on the decision of Mr. Wilberforce, and he was faithful to the occasion; but every expedient having been devised, and every form which the measure could assume, having been put before the house and rejected, Mr. Wilberforce and his friends did not

deem it advisable to bring the subject again into parliament, till some new circumstances should favor its introduction.

From 1799 to the year 1804, he contented himself with moving for certain papers, and with assuring the house that he had not grown cool in the cause. In the latter year, the abolition committee determined on renewed exertions, having increased their number by electing James Stephen, Zachary Macauley, Henry Brougham, Robert Grant, William Allen, and others, members of its body.

The entrance of Irish members into the British parliament, which occurred in 1804, revived the hopes of the abolitionists. Most of them were known to be friendly to the cause, and, as they were generally free from the commercial influence which had perverted the views of many English representatives, the support of all was hoped for. Mr. Wilberforce, accordingly, on the 30th of May, moved that the house resolve itself into committee; and he prefaced his motion by one of the most impassioned speeches ever made within its walls. We have generally understood it was his noblest effort.

The second reading, on the 7th of June, was carried by a majority of 100 to 42; and on the

27th of the same month, the bill passed its last stage, by a majority of 69 to 36; but when forwarded to the upper house, it was postponed, on the motion of Lord Hawkesbury, to the following session.

In 1805, it was again introduced by Mr. Wilberforce, with every prospect of success, but was unhappily lost in the commons by a majority of seven, through the excessive confidence of its friends. It appeared that no fewer than nine members, who had never been absent once in sixteen years when it was agitated, gave way to engagements on the day of the motion, from a belief that it was safe. It appeared, also, that out of the great number of Irish members who supported it in the former year, only nine were in the house when it was lost. It appeared, also, that, previous to this event, a canvass, more importunate than had been heard of on any former occasion, had been made among the latter, by those interested in the continuance of the trade.*

But the period at length had arrived, when this great question was to be decided.

The death of Mr. Pitt, in January, 1806, made way for the Fox and Grenville administra-

* Clarkson's History.

tion, and the question was immediately ushered into parliament under their ministerial auspices. In May, a bill was introduced for the abolition of the foreign, and the limitation of the domestic slave-trade, which passed both houses of parliament, and received the royal assent. On the 10th of June, Mr. Fox introduced the subject, at the special request of Mr. Wilberforce, in doing which, he passed a high eulogium on the latter. "Before, sir, I proceed to state the grounds on which I look with confidence for the almost unanimous countenance of the house in this measure, I feel myself called on to say a few words, by way of apology, for being the person to come forward on the present occasion. For the last sixteen or seventeen years of my life, I have been in the habit of uniformly and strenuously supporting the several motions made by a respectable gentleman, Mr. Wilberforce, who has so often, by his meritorious exertions on this subject, attracted the applause of this house, and claimed the admiration of the public. During the long period that I found it in such excellent hands, it was impossible for me to feel the slightest disposition to take it out of them. I am still of the same opinion; and cannot but think it would have been much better, if the same hon-

orable member and his friends had retained it in their own hands; and they might certainly have depended on me, and those with whom I have the honor to act, for the same ardent support which we have uniformly given them. But, sir, the honorable member and many of his friends seemed so strongly to entertain different sentiments on that point, from me, that I submitted my own opinion to theirs, and now assume the task, reluctantly on that account, but on every other, most gladly. So fully am I impressed with the vast importance and necessity of attaining what will be the object of my motion this day, that if, during the almost forty years that I have now had the honor of a seat in parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough, and could retire from public life with comfort, and conscious satisfaction that I had done my duty." He closed his speech by moving, "That this house, considering the African slave-trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity and policy, will, with all practicable expedition, take effectual measures for the abolition of the said trade, in such a manner, and at such a period, as may be deemed advisable," which being carried by a majority of 114 to 15, Mr.

Wilberforce immediately moved, "That an humble address be presented to his majesty, beseeching his majesty to take such measures as in his wisdom he shall think proper, for establishing, by negotiation with foreign powers, a concert and agreement for abolishing the African slave-trade, and for affording assistance, mutually, towards carrying into execution any regulations which may be adopted by any or all of the contracting parties, for accomplishing their common purpose; assuring his majesty that this house, feeling the justice and honor of the British nation to be deeply and peculiarly involved in the great object they have in view, will be ready at all times, cheerfully to concur in giving effect to such measures as his majesty may see fit to adopt for its attainment." This was carried without a division.

From this moment, the great question was considered as triumphant. Some apprehension, indeed, was awakened by the death of Mr. Fox, in October, 1806. He had been among the earliest, most consistent and zealous of the parliamentary advocates of the abolition; and when in office, he nobly redeemed the pledges which he had given in opposition. The sacred cause occupied his thoughts amidst the struggles and

pains of dissolution. "Two things," said he, on his death-bed, "I wish earnestly to see accomplished—peace with Europe, and the abolition of the slave-trade; but of the two, I wish the latter."

The confidence of the abolitionists was restored, by Lord Grenville introducing, on the 2d of January, 1807, a bill for the abolition of the slave-trade into the house of lords. It was ultimately carried through both houses, although against much opposition; Earl Gray, then Lord Horwick, distinguishing himself by its eloquent support in the commons. It must be eminently gratifying to this nobleman, distinguished alike by the unblemished virtues of his private and public life, to have been instrumental, not only in the abolition of the African trade, but also in the extinction of slavery itself. The blessing of many ready to perish will descend on the administration over which he so honorably presides; and the enlightened tribute of a nation's praise will solace and cheer his spirit amid the increasing infirmities of age. It is a singular event, and highly to the honor of his political connections, that the same party which achieved the former triumph has now the latter also. Had they conferred no other benefit on their nation

and species, the abolition of the slave-trade, and the extinction of British colonial slavery, would have secured them the admiration and gratitude of posterity.

Though the bill which Lord Grenville introduced was pressed forward with the utmost possible expedition, the friends of humanity and religion were far from being free from anxiety. Even after it had passed both houses, its fate was regarded as uncertain; for the king, being displeased with his ministers, had determined on their dismission. But the force of public opinion prevailed, and the royal assent was given by commission to the bill. "This event," says Mr. Clarkson, "took place the next day; for on Wednesday, the 25th, at half past eleven in the morning, his majesty's message was delivered to the different members of it, that they were then to wait upon him, to deliver up the seals of their offices. It then appeared that a commission for the royal assent to this bill, among others, had been obtained. This commission was instantly opened by the lord chancellor, (Erskine,) who was accompanied by the lords Holland and Auckland; and as the clock struck twelve, just when the sun was in its meridian splendor to witness this august act, this

establishment of a Magna Charta for Africa in Britain, and to sanction it by its most vivid and glorious beams, it was completed. The ceremony being over, the seals of the respective offices were delivered up; so that the execution of this commission was the last act of the administration of lord Grenville—an administration which, on account of its virtuous exertions in behalf of the oppressed African race, will pass to posterity, living through successive generations in the love and gratitude of the most virtuous of mankind."

Thus ended, after a continuance for twenty years, one of the most glorious contests ever carried on in any age or country—a contest, not of brutal violence, but of reason—a contest between those who felt deeply for the happiness and the honor of their fellow creatures, and those who, through vicious custom and the impulse of avarice, had trampled under foot the sacred rights of their nature, and had even attempted to efface all title to the divine image from their minds.

It is impossible, at the present day, duly to estimate the satisfaction and joy with which Mr. Wilberforce must have witnessed this consummation of his labors. He had borne the burden

and the heat of the day; he had watched over the cause with more than parental solicitude; had nurtured its infancy, guided its youth, and won for it a nation's sympathy and support; he had witnessed the desertion of some of its earliest advocates, and had been so frequently defeated as to require far more than ordinary firmness to sustain its vigor and determination of purpose. But he was steadfast and immovable, and the good providence of God ultimately crowned his labors with success. The mere politician may exult at the success of his cause, but the joy of Mr. Wilberforce was that of the philanthropist and christian. He had succeeded, amidst incredible difficulties, in lessening the amount of human misery, and in averting from his country the displeasure of that God who is a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in his distress. In the successful termination of his efforts, he beheld an answer to the prayers of the faithful, and an omen of good to the future generations of men. Hence his piety and his patriotism alike ministered to his joy. The principles on which he had acted were but imperfectly known to the men of his day. They probably imagined him to be altogether such an one as themselves, and had therefore referred his conduct to secular

ambition, or to mere benevolence of heart. But his main impulse had been drawn from heaven; and his resort, in every season of perplexity and gloom, had been to the throne of his God and Father. Sustained in his labors by an enlightened conscience, he could not but rejoice in their successful termination. The character of christianity was thus relieved from reproach, and some promise afforded of yet brighter days to the degraded tribes of Africa.

The feelings of Mr. Wilberforce on this occasion were eloquently alluded to by Sir Samuel Romilly.

"But sir," said that distinguished statesman, "if such be the feelings of those who have borne only a part in this transaction, what must be the feelings of my honorable friend Mr. Wilberforce? What is there in the wide range of human ambition which could afford pleasures so pure, gratification so exalted, as he must enjoy? When I look at the man at the head of the French monarchy, surrounded as he is with all the pomp of power, and all the pride of victory, distributing kingdoms to his family, and principalities to his followers; seeming, as he sits upon his throne, to have reached the summit of human ambition, the pinnacle of earthly happiness; and

when I follow him into his closet, or to his bed, and contemplate the anguish with which his solitude must be tortured, by recollections of the blood he has spilt, and the oppressions he has committed; and when I compare with these pangs of remorse the feelings which must accompany my honorable friend from this house to his home, after the vote of this night shall have accomplished the object of his humane and unceasing labors—when he shall retire into the bosom of his delighted and happy family—when he shall lay himself down on his bed, reflecting on the innumerable voices that will be raised in every quarter of the world to bless his name,—how much more enviable his lot, in the consciousness of having preserved so many millions of his fellow creatures, than that of the man with whom I have compared him, on a throne to which he has waded through slaughter and oppression! Who will not be proud to concur with my honored friend in promoting the greatest act of national benefit, and securing to the Africans the greatest blessing which God has ever put in the power of man to confer on his fellow creatures?"

We cannot read the history of this struggle, without feeling the encouragement which it affords to every virtuous and benevolent deed.

Greater difficulties can scarcely be conceived, than those with which the abolitionists had to contend. Their whole project was regarded as chimerical; and every means which wealth, power and dishonesty could devise, were employed against them. The evil to be remedied was practised at the distance of some thousands of miles; and those who had witnessed its enormities possessed, for the most part, a pecuniary interest in their continuance. It was well known that the highest personage in the state was opposed to their views, and that the revenues of the nation, and the prosperity of its commerce, were extensively regarded as threatened by them. Undeterred, however, by these circumstances, the friends of humanity determined on their course, and the rectitude of their object gave them success. Their labors constituted the seed from which an abundant harvest has been gathered in our day. That the great patriarch of the cause should have survived to witness the struggle which was to crown with victory the labors of his life, must be gratifying to every benevolent mind. Amid the decay of nature, his spirit must have been refreshed by the scene he witnessed, and the language of his heart have been similar to that of Simeon, "Lord, now

lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

In order to bring the history of the *abolition* to a close, I have omitted some circumstances, which materially affected the happiness, and developed the character of Mr. Wilberforce. These I now proceed to notice. In 1797, he married Miss Barbara Spooner, the daughter of an opulent banker in Birmingham, who survives him. Of their six children, the four sons are living. Two of them are clergymen of the church of England. The Rev. Samuel Wilberforce holds the living of Brightson, Isle of Wight, presented to him by the Bishop of Winchester; and the Rev. Robert Wilberforce, the third son, that of East Farleigh, near Maidstone, on the presentation of the Lord Chancellor.

This year was also distinguished in the life of Mr. Wilberforce, by the publication of his "Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians."

The value of the service which he rendered by this work cannot be estimated, without some knowledge of the circumstances of England at this period. The rapid decline of religion at the close of the seventeenth, and during the first half of the eighteenth century, had awakened

many serious apprehensions in the more thoughtful and pious of all classes, respecting the future fate of our country. There has been much discussion about the causes of this decline, which has exhibited far more of the spleen of party than of a sober and honest inquiry after truth. The severe and unnatural restraint under which vice and irreligion were held, during the time of the Commonwealth, was followed by a ruinous reaction on the return of the Stuarts. The stern morality of the puritans had put vice to shame, and their legislation had succeeded in giving more of the appearance of religion to the nation than it had ever previously borne. But there was much of hypocrisy in this; hypocrisy, be it remembered, on the part of the enemies of the puritans, though commonly charged on themselves. These high-minded and illustrious men, who protected at once the ark of our liberty and the temple of our God, expected to coerce the public mind; and, attempting this, they failed. They held it under a restraint which was felt to be violent and irksome, and we need not, therefore, wonder at the eagerness with which vice was followed, when once this yoke was broken. The unhallowed passions which had previously been refused indulgence, immediately sought to

compensate themselves for the mortification to which they had reluctantly submitted. The return of Charles proved the greatest moral evil which our country had experienced. Unprincipled and licentious, he violated the common decencies of life, and gave sanction and currency to vice, which has painfully moulded our national character. Religion became, in consequence, a by-word and reproach; her most zealous ministers were silenced; her doctrines were made the subjects of profane banter, and her altars were polluted by the approach of men of secular ambition, or of unholy lusts. The light of truth was thus gradually diminished: and God, incensed at the apostacy of the nation, withdrew the cheering tokens of his presence. "The Gallican church," remarks the late Rev. Robert Hall, and the passage is equally applicable to the case before us, "no doubt, looked upon it as a signal triumph, when she prevailed on Louis the Fourteenth to repeal the edict of Nantes, and to suppress the protestant religion. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look, after this period, for her Fenelons and her Pascals—where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion

for it, when there was no lustre of christian holiness surrounding her; nor for learning, when she had no longer any opponents to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious as she pleased; and, amid the silence and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains, and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death; the feeble remains of life were extinguished; and she lay a putrid corpse and a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations." Such was the state of things when Whitfield and Wesley commenced their labors. The character of those labors, and the degree of success which accompanied them, are matters of history, and need not, therefore, be dwelt on in this place. Their influence on the hierarchy was, for a time, very limited. But few of the clergy sympathized with their views, or emulated their zeal; while the higher and more influential of their number embraced every opportunity of holding up these holy men to the contempt and reprobation of the profane and formalist. It consequently followed, that while the lower and middle classes of so-

ciety were materially benefited by these apostolic laborers, the highest grade was wholly unaffected by them. At no period of our history was this order of society more thoroughly irreligious than at the close of the last century. They were utterly destitute of the spirit of christianity, and had so mistaken its nature as to substitute in its place an unmeaning and pernicious system of external rites. "The fact is, that through the secularity and irreligion of the clergy, evangelical truth was nearly effaced from the minds of the members of the Establishment, and in the higher ranks, and that an indolent acquiescence in established formularies had succeeded to the ardor with which the great principles of religion were embraced at the Reformation. Such was the state of the public mind, that in a contest between orthodoxy and heresy, the former proved triumphant, merely because it was already established, and had the plea of antiquity and prescription in its favor."

In this lamentable state of things, it was of the highest importance that some religious advocate should step forth, qualified by his rank, character and talents, to command the respect, and to effect the instruction of the higher orders. "To stem the torrent of infidelity," remarks

the Bishop of Calcutta, in an introductory essay to the 'Practical View,' published some years since, "in the higher and middle classes of society—to rouse the national establishment to the holy efforts for which it was so well adapted—to restore the standard of that pure and vital christianity on which all subjection to law, and all obedience from motives of conscience, and all real morality and piety ultimately depend—to sow anew the principles of loyalty, contentment, peace, holiness, deeply and permanently in the minds of men—to rescue, in a word, our country from impending ruin, and render her a blessing to the nations,—to these high ends, something more was decidedly wanting.

"The writings of statesmen did not meet the case. They excited, indeed, a just horror of atheism and insubordination; they painted the miseries of revolutionary frenzy in its true colors; they vindicated the national creed in general, and the national clergy; they enforced the importance of christianity, in its morals and its influence on the good order of society; but all this was partial and ineffective. There was too much of personality and acrimony in their strictures—too much of worldly policy; they understood not the full extent of the malady which

they treated, nor did they rightly conceive of the nature of that heart-felt christianity which was alone capable of producing a cure.

"In this state of things—the storm of the French revolution still raging—an open renunciation of christianity just made in a great nation—Europe rent asunder with war, which, after a duration of four or five years, seemed farther than ever from a close—the church feeble, and full of apprehension—the ministers of the state, and the legislature, overwhelmed with schemes of defence abroad and regulation at home—the minds of thoughtful men portending calamities—untold difficulties thickening around—in this state of things, who could be found to stand in the gap? who could rise with the necessary talent and reputation to calm the distracted people? who could mildly, and yet authoritatively, interpose between the clamors of party? who could recall men, with a bold and friendly voice, to the true source of their salvation, and the adequate remedy for their troubles? One man at length appeared. Our author was the honored individual. He undertook the task, unconscious to himself of the extent of service he was rendering his country. He possessed all the various natural advantages required for such an

emergency; and he was soon acknowledged to be the person who could speak with effect, at such a moment, on the subject of religion, and who could best make an open confession of its genuine doctrines before his fellow statesmen, and appeal effectually to their hearts and consciences, as to the necessity of a return to the faith and piety of their fathers."

The design of Mr. Wilberforce was strictly what his title-page denotes. He does not attempt to establish the truth of christianity, but assuming this, he aims to exhibit her true form and features to his countrymen. He does not contend with the sceptic or infidel, but with the nominal christian. Analyzing the prevalent system of religion, he shows it to be essentially defective, wanting many of the peculiarities of the christian revelation, and utterly inadequate to the high purpose of man's recovery unto God. He takes the Bible as his standard, and, acting on the principle of protestantism, brings the popular faith to this test. "The main object which he has in view," Mr. Wilberforce states in his introduction, "is not to convince the sceptic, or to answer the arguments of persons who avowedly oppose the fundamental doctrines of our religion, but to point out the scanty and erroneous system

of the bulk of those who belong to the class of orthodox christians, and to contrast their defective scheme with a representation of what the author apprehends to be real christianity. Often has it filled him with deep concern, to observe in this description of persons, scarcely any distinct knowledge of the real nature and principles of the religion which they profess."

It is accurately remarked by the Bishop of Calcutta, in his introductory essay to the "Practical View," that "there is nothing more remarkable in the style and manner of the work, than the skill in debate, the parliamentary tact, if we may so speak, which is apparent throughout. You discern in it everywhere the marked effects of the author's public life. You cannot read three pages without feeling that the writer is in the midst of your very thoughts and feelings: all is business—all is a vivid delineation of actual life—all is directly aimed at the heart. It is a persuasive address to his fellow statesmen and countrymen, in which he kindles with his great topics, gains upon your judgment and heart as he proceeds, and leaves you at last under the impressions produced by a sincere and affecting orator, rather than of a writer or a controversialist. You see in it the hand of a master, used to

state the objections of an opponent, not only fairly, but in the very words that such an opponent would employ; you see the skill of a legislator, compelled to be on the watch, aware that any, the least slip would be exposed, and trained to a popular, commanding, and yet measured way of stating things. No adversary is outraged; no personal feelings are wounded; no real difficulties extenuated or denied: but all is open, and manly, and conciliatory. Almost every imaginable concession is made on each topic. The objections are stated at such length, and with so much justice, that you tremble as you are reading them, lest a satisfactory answer should not be given; and yet, after repeated admissions, limitations, cautions, apologies, every one of them most apparently kind and sincere, the blow is at last struck so hard, and with so much truth of aim, as to fall with irresistible force. We are not aware that we ever read any book in which everything was so fairly, and, at the same time, so fully stated. No reader has to complain of any material misrepresentation. The whole habit of the author's public life seems to have been brought to bear, in this benevolent and faithful appeal to his country. Seldom, indeed, has such a talent for debate, and such an accu-

rate knowledge of the human heart, been united with such a delicate and friendly attention to the feelings of others, and such a force of persuasion and authority of truth.

"There is, further, a warmth in the style of the work, which adds to its attractions. It bears all the marks of having been composed after years of deliberate preparation, indeed, as to the main topics, and a thorough faculty of discussion, acquired in the best school of eloquence, in just that sort of pressure and hurry from the demands of public duties, which lend it a naturalness and warmth, and generous urgency, which are best adapted to gain its end. It is a book which was poured out, if we may so speak, between two sessions of parliament. It is the lively and urgent *expose* of his views of christianity, made by a statesman on a sudden impulse, to the vast influential body of legislators and men of the world among whom he was acting his part, and whom he had neither the opportunity nor the leisure of acquainting, by any other means, with the true character of those religious principles by which he wished to govern all his own conduct, and to which he would reduce the wandering and unsettled notions of those with whom he habitually conversed.

The whole consequences of this publication will not be known until the records of this world are opened at the bar of God. One instance of its usefulness is too interesting to be omitted. It is recorded, in the Life of the Rev. Legh Richmond, that, shortly after he had entered on his ministerial charge in the Isle of Wight, one of his college friends, to whom a near relative had sent the "Practical View," forwarded the work to Mr. Richmond, requesting him to examine it, and to report his opinion of its contents. The work thus incidentally introduced was the means of effecting an entire change in the views and habits of Mr. Richmond. It had been sent to him by a thoughtless friend, in order to relieve himself from the irksome task of its perusal; but it proved mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. Speaking of his son Wilberforce, Mr. Richmond remarks, "He was baptized by the name of Wilberforce, in consequence of my personal friendship with that individual, whose name long has been, and ever will be, allied to all that is able, amiable, and truly christian. That gentleman had already accepted the office of sponsor to one of my daughters; but the subsequent birth of this boy afforded me the additional satisfaction of more familiarly associat-

ing his name with that of my family. But it was not the tie of ordinary friendship, nor the veneration which, in common with multitudes, I felt for the name of Wilberforce, which induced me to give that name to my child: there had, for many years past, subsisted a tie between myself and that much-loved friend, of a higher and more sacred character than any other which earth can afford. I feel it to be a debt of gratitude, which I owe to God and to man, to take this affecting opportunity of stating, that to the unsought and unexpected introduction of Mr. Wilberforce's book on 'Practical Christianity,' I owe, through God's mercy, the first sacred impression which I ever received, as to the spiritual nature of the gospel system, the vital character of personal religion, the corruption of the human heart, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. As a young minister, recently ordained, and just entrusted with the charge of two parishes in the Isle of Wight, I had commenced my labors too much in the spirit of the world, and founded my public instructions on the erroneous notions which prevailed among my academical and literary associates. The scriptural principles stated in the 'Practical View,' convinced me of my error, led me to the study of the scriptures with an earn-

estness to which I had hitherto been a stranger, humbled my heart, and brought me to seek the love and blessing of that Saviour, who alone can afford a peace which the world cannot give. Through the study of this book, I was induced to examine the writings of the British and foreign reformers. I saw the coincidence of their doctrines with those of the scriptures, and those which the word of God taught me to be essential to the welfare of myself and my flock. I know too well what has passed within my heart, for now a long period of time, not to feel and to confess that to this incident I was indebted, originally, for those solid views of christianity, on which I rest my hope for time and eternity. May I not, then, call the honored author of that book my spiritual father? and if my spiritual father, therefore my best earthly friend. The wish to connect his name with my own was natural and justifiable. It was a lasting memorial of the most important transaction of my life; it still lives amid the tenderness of present emotions, as a signal of endearment and gratitude; and I trust its character is imperishable."

Mr. Wilberforce continued to represent the county of York until 1812, from which period to the close of his parliamentary life, about 1825,

he was returned by Lord Calthorp for the borough of Bramber. He was a frequent speaker in the house, but he did not take that prominent part in its business which he had formerly done. In 1813, on the renewal of the East India Company's charter, he gave his most strenuous support to the cause of christian missions, then represented as inconsistent with the preservation of our Eastern territories, and happily succeeded in throwing open these vast dependencies of the empire to the free entrance of christian truth. In 1816, he introduced and carried his "Registry Bill," the object of which was to render the abolition of the slave-trade effectual, by preventing an illicit importation of Africans. This was violently opposed by the colonists and their partisans in this country, but was ably defended by Mr. Wilberforce in parliament, and by Mr. Stephen from the press. It was evident that some such measure was absolutely necessary, to prevent a systematic and extensive violation of the law.

A few years afterwards, Mr. Wilberforce published "An Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire, in behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies." His undiminished interest in the welfare of this unhappy class, the strong conviction

of duty which impelled him to act on their behalf, and the consistency of his present views with his former professions, are shown throughout this pamphlet, in a strain of mild and persuasive eloquence. It is particularly important, as showing that the abolitionists had, from the first, contemplated the extinction of slavery as the ultimate reward of their labors; and will be read with interest in future years, as the last public effort of an aged philanthropist to arouse the conscience and benevolent sympathies of a nation.

Notwithstanding the transparent integrity and benevolence of Mr. Wilberforce, many attempts were made by the unprincipled abettors of the system he attacked, to injure his reputation. Defeated in the field of honorable debate, they have endeavored to bring his character and proceedings into suspicion, by propagating false and calumnious reports. One of these gave occasion to the following note, addressed to my highly respected friend and ministering brother, the Rev. William Knibb, missionary, from Jamaica.

East Fareleigh, near Maidstone,
23d Nov. 1832.

My Dear Sir:

I very gladly authorize you to give the flattest contradiction possible to the statement you mentioned, that, "previously to my endeavors to effect the abolition

of the slave-trade, or the extinction of slavery, I had sold my slaves." The truth is, that neither I, nor any of my family possessed a single slave, or had any concern with slavery. I cannot conceive how such a report could originate; and surely the gentleman who has assisted in circulating such a rumor, must have thought it strange indeed, if such a charge against me could be truly urged, that, as the printed debates of the two houses will show, I should have gone on pleading for twenty years against the slave-trade, without the circumstance being mentioned. I rejoice to hear from you, that you proceed successfully in your sacred warfare, for so I must really term it, and remain, with esteem and regard,

My dear sir, very sincerely yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

On the arrival of the late Queen Caroline, he labored to avert those revolting discussions, by which such outrage was done to public morals. For this purpose, he moved in parliament an address to her majesty, praying her to return to France. His proposition was adopted by the house in a manner most flattering to himself; but, as is well known, it proved unsuccessful.

During his last moments, he was supported by the consolations of religion. The principles which had guided his public conduct, sustained him throughout a protracted illness, and shed a mild and christian lustre over the closing scenes

of his life. Amidst his increasing infirmities, the "inward man" was renewed day by day. So abundant were his consolations, that he himself remarked, "The last year has been the happiest of my life." A short time before his decease, a friend having said, on his recovery from a severe attack, "I hope, sir, you will feel better soon," he replied, "I am quite prepared for the worst." He then asked for "Baxter's Dying Thoughts," and read them. In the course of the last month of his life, a friend was speaking to him of his prospect of heaven, when he observed, "As for me, I have nothing to say but the publican's plea, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" On the Friday preceding his death, hopes were entertained by his sorrowing relatives, that he might yet be spared a little longer; but more threatening symptoms appeared on Saturday, and, on the Monday following, July 29th, this inestimable man departed from the scene of his labors, to enter into the joy of his Lord.

His funeral was intended to be strictly private; but the following requisition, equally honorable to Mr. Wilberforce and to the age in which he lived, induced his family to alter their arrangements:

"We, the undersigned, members of both Houses of Parliament, being anxious, upon public grounds, to show respect for the memory of the late WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, and being also satisfied that public honors can never be more fitly bestowed than upon such benefactors of mankind, earnestly request that he may be buried in Westminster Abbey, and that we, and those who agree with us in sentiment, may have permission to attend his funeral."

To this requisition were affixed the signatures —William Frederick, (Duke of Gloucester,) Brougham, Eldon, Lansdowne, Wellesley, Grey, W. Cantuar, (Archbishop of Canterbury,) Ripon, Wellington, Harrowby, and of twenty-seven other peers, and those of upwards of ninety members of the House of Commons; and this on a short notice, and at so late a period of the session.

The funeral took place in the manner thus proposed, on Saturday, August 3. "The peers, amounting to a considerable number, all dressed in deep black, having put on scarves and hat bands, proceeded from the Jerusalem Chamber of the House of Lords into the Abbey, entering at the Poets' Corner; while the members of the House of Commons, numbering between one and two hundred, in full mourning, proceeded two abreast to the west door of the Abbey, by

which they entered. It was a proud sight, to see the royalty, the high station, the rank and greatest talent of the country, become the pall-bearers of a virtuous citizen; which was at once a compliment to the memory of the man, a credit to their own hearts and understandings, and an honor of which the people of this great country may proudly boast to other nations. The grave was formed close to the tombs of Canning, Fox and Pitt; and while the most solemn part of the funeral service was read, their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Sussex and Gloucester, the Duke of Wellington, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Chichester, and the various other Bishops, the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the other pall-bearers, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord Rosslyn, Lord Althorp, Lord Auckland, &c. formed a circle round the grave."

The general bias of his politics was towards the tories; but he was perfectly free from that servile attachment to party which is one of the characteristics of a weak or unprincipled mind. It is probable that his early acquaintance with William Pitt influenced his political career. The partiality of friendship induces even the most liberal and independent to regard with a favora-

ble eye the opinions and the course of an early associate. Though the intimate friend of the minister, he never solicited or accepted place or honor; and the only personal favor he ever asked, is said to have been for the *entree* through the park, in driving to the house; which he declined, on finding that importance was attached to the boon.

On his retirement from parliament in 1825, he had been a member of the house for forty-five years, during part of which time his influence had been greater than that of any other person not possessed of office. It is said that forty members were influenced by his speech on Lord Melville's prosecution, when he pronounced the conduct of that nobleman a fit subject for censure. He possessed in a very high degree some of the most important attributes of popular oratory, and his voice was so sweetly modulated, that he was at one time called "the nightingale of the house."

The private character of Mr. Wilberforce was as amiable as his public course was upright. It has not unfrequently been found, that the bustle and excitement of a public life unfit men for the more calm and retired duties of the domestic circle. The ambitious statesman often regards

his home with indifference. Its joys are too tame to awaken his sensibilities, or to induce him to occupy much time in their cultivation. But it was far otherwise with Mr. Wilberforce. He repaired from the senate to his house with evident delight, and borrowed happiness from the joy his presence imparted. He partook of the pleasures of domestic life with a zest of which most politicians are destitute. "He was extremely fond," says a relative, "of children, and would enter into their gambols with the gaiety of a school-boy. We need scarcely add, that he was the idol of his own. Their veneration, their filial attachment, bordered on enthusiasm; their hourly attendance on his wants resembled the maternal anxiety of a widowed parent for an only child. Mr. Wilberforce was particularly happy in conversation: his memory was richly stored with classical allusions; a natural poetry of mind constantly displayed itself; a melodious cadence marked every thought and every expression of the thought. He was seldom impassioned; not often energetic; but his tones were mellifluous and persuasive, exactly according with the sentiment they conveyed."

His attachment to the established church was well known, and greatly contributed to the favor-

able reception of his "Practical View" in the higher classes of society. Sometimes, however, he attended at dissenting places of worship; and, on one occasion, partook of the Lord's supper with non-conforming christians. A gentleman having expressed some doubt of this circumstance, and Mr. Wilberforce being asked if the report was correct, replied, in a tone which indicated surprise, "Yes; my dear; is it not the church of God?" So completely free was he from the narrowness and intolerance of the partisan.

He was eminently a man of prayer. His intercourse with God was habitual, and hence resulted the consistency of his life. "Persons of the highest distinction," says the Rev. Joseph Brown, in his funeral sermon, "were frequently at his breakfast-table, but he never made his appearance till he had concluded his own meditations, reading his bible, and prayer; always securing, as it were, to God, or rather to his own soul, I believe, the first hour of the morning. Whoever surrounded his breakfast-table, however distinguished the individuals, they were invited to join the family circle in family prayer. In reference to his own soul, I am informed, he set apart days, or a part of them, on which he had

received particular mercies, for especial prayer. "Now," would he sometimes say to those attending him, "I shall not want you for some time." Those who were accustomed to his habits knew that he devoted those hours to meditation, and reading, and prayer. When a clergyman, who had been visiting, was about to leave, "Stop," said Mr. Wilberforce, "I must assemble my children." He did so. "Now," said he, "before you go, you must pray with them."

"One beautiful point of his character I must just notice: not only did he pray in his closet, and with his family, but if his domestics were ill, at their bed-side—*there* was their valued master praying with them—praying for them."

Mr. Scott also, in his funeral sermon, bears a similar testimony to the religious character Mr. Wilberforce maintained in his family. "The following incident," he says, "came almost within my own knowledge:—A minister of state called upon him on some public business on a Sunday: he at once excused himself, saying, he would wait upon his lordship at any hour he would fix the next day, but he was then going to church! And this was after he had already attended the morning service. It was his maxim, that every man should be the priest of his own household:

and this character he would never resign, though he might from time to time delegate it to others. Hence, even when he had clergymen present, of whose assistance he would at other times gladly avail himself, he would frequently conduct the daily religious services in person. And here we are assured, 'the fulness and richness of his expositions of scripture, and the fervor of his supplications, were such as none can forget who ever were present at them.' And then the full effect would be given to all this among the members of his household, by the tenderness and consideration which he ever showed for them. 'If any of his domestics,' said one frequently resident under his roof, and on the most familiar terms—'If any of his domestics show a ruffled temper, or fall into misconduct, the case is met rather with pity than with resentment, and anxiety is shown to restore the offender, like a sick member, in the spirit of meekness.' This was the rule of his family. Though much conversant with the world, he entered into no compromise with it as to the way of spending his time, or countenancing its vain amusements. He had no leisure, and, what is the great thing to be aimed at, he had no heart, for such frivolities; but quite the con-

trary. Indeed, I have observed, however others may plead for such indulgences, that those who have been previously most acquainted with them, and best know their effects, on becoming decidedly religious, most strictly renounce them, and protest most strongly against them. Finally, the spirituality of his mind under the press of public business, and amid the succession of persons who crowded upon them, was truly surprising. He seemed always ready for devotional exercises, and for religious conversation, in which *the heart* evidently bore as large a share as the understanding. And at church he ever appeared to be one of the most devout and fervent of worshippers."

His devotional engagements gave energy to his public life. He came forth from his closet strengthened with might in his inner man, and was thereby enabled to achieve what would have overwhelmed many other minds. It was his own conviction, that he never could have sustained the labor and stretch of intellect required in his early political life, if it had not been for the rest of his sabbath; and that he could name several of his contemporaries who had experienced a premature death, or fallen into the more

dreadful catastrophe of insanity and suicide, in consequence of its neglect.

Humility was by no means one of the least prominent features of his character. "Walking in the Isle of Wight," says the Rev. Joseph Brown, "a person begging approached him, using the most flattering language. 'Do not so,' said Mr. Wilberforce to the beggar; 'I am only a poor sinner like yourself.' "

"Of his extreme humility, I experienced an instance which at once astonished and embarrassed me. One day, in conversation, Mr. Wilberforce kindly gave me some advice. I expressed my thanks, and said how much I should feel indebted, if, in conversation or correspondence, he would at all times be my counsellor, and, if necessary, correct me, and point out my faults. He suddenly stopped, (for we were walking together,) and replied, 'I will;—but you must promise me one thing.' 'With pleasure,' I answered, little thinking what it was. 'Well, then,' continued Mr. Wilberforce, 'in all your conversation and correspondence with me, be candid and open, and point out my faults.' "

Such was the man whom princes, nobles, and senators have delighted to honor. All classes

held him in veneration. When the House of Commons, some years since, was engaged in an investigation that deeply interested George the Third, the king inquired, from one who had just left the house, "Who was under examination?" and being told, he asked, "Who were taking notes?" it was answered, "Mr. Wilberforce is very busy taking notes." "Ah," replied his majesty, "he is a good man—he is a good man; I wish they all were like him." His memory will long be embalmed in the grateful recollection of his species; and the value of the services he has rendered to the cause of humanity, will be seen in the future freedom, intelligence, and virtue of the negro population.

APPENDIX.

THE following account of the last honors rendered to the remains of Wilberforce, is taken from a London paper. It will be considered an appropriate sequel to the history of his life and services, contained in the preceding pages of this volume.

FUNERAL OF MR. WILBERFORCE.

The funeral of that most excellent man, Mr. Wilberforce, eminent through the course of his long life for his public and private virtues, for his sterling patriotism, his christian piety, and his universal feeling of philanthropy, took place on Saturday. It was at first intended, in conformity to the wish of the deceased, to conduct his funeral with the utmost privacy, and to inter his remains in Newington church yard; but a very considerable number of the most distinguished members of the Houses of Peers and Commons, anxious to pay a last tribute of respect to the memory of a man who, through a long series of years, had been so honorably distinguished in the British senate, prevailed on his sons and immediate friends to allow the funeral to be a public

one, and the place of interment to be Westminster Abbey, that solemn habitation of "the departed great;" thus conferring the highest possible honor on the memory of Mr. Wilberforce, and giving to the world (for of Mr. Wilberforce it may be said, that he was not the property of a nook, but of the world) an exalted testimony of the country, and of the friendship which his mild manners and noble qualities had won him.

At about half past twelve o'clock, the Order of the Procession having been arranged, the coffin containing the remains of the deceased was placed in the hearse, and the procession began to move in the following order:

Horsemen, two and two abreast, wearing black scarves and hat bands, and preceded by Mr. Birch, the Family Undertaker.

One Attendant. — Two Mutes abreast. — One Attendant.
Plume of Feathers.
Two Mutes abreast.
Attendants. — Horsemen, two and two abreast. — Attendants.
Pall Supporters. — Hearse, (bearing the Coffin,) — Pall Supporters.
Richly studded with black plumes, and
Drawn by six jet horses, richly
Caparisoned, with black velvet trappings,
And adorned with nodding plumes.
Attendants. — Eight Mourning Coaches, — Attendants.
The first bearing the Deceased's Sons
As Chief Mourners;
The others containing the Mourners.
Noblemen and Gentlemen's Carriages,

To the number of nearly fifty, being chiefly those of the members of both Houses of Parliament.

In this manner the procession moved slowly from Cadogan place towards Westminster Abbey, forming a very lengthened train, accompanied by immense crowds

of people, who flanked it in moving columns, on either side; and a little after one o'clock, the signal that it was approaching the Abbey was given by Mr. Lee, the High Constable of Westminster, to the Peers and Commoners, who had assembled in their relative Houses of Parliament for the purpose of following the body in procession through the aisles of the Abbey. The Peers, amounting to a considerable number, all dressed in deep black, having put on scarves and hat bands, proceeded from the Jerusalem Chamber of the House of Lords into the Abbey, entering at Poets' Corner; while the members of the House of Commons, numbering between one and two hundred, in full mourning, proceeded two abreast to the west door of the Abbey, by which they entered.

The coffin, at this period, having arrived at the western door, was moved from the hearse and placed on the shoulders of six men, the pall of rich black velvet with a deep border of white satin, having been thrown over it. When inside the door the bearers were ordered to halt; it was here a proud sight to see the royalty, the high station, rank and greatest talent of the country, become the pall bearers of a virtuous citizen, which was at once a compliment to the memory of the man, a credit to their own hearts and understandings, and an honor of which the people of this great country may proudly boast to other nations.

The following are the names of the distinguished individuals who supported the pall:—The Lord Chancellor, Speaker of the House of Commons, Lord Bexley, and the Marquis of Westminster, on the one side; the Right Honorable Charles Grant, Sir Robert Inglis, Mr. W.

Smith (as we are informed,) and his Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, on the other. His Royal Highness was the last on the extreme right, it being a rule, according to the etiquette of such occasions, for royalty to be last among the pall bearers: the Lord Chancellor was first on the extreme left.

A solemn stillness now prevailed, amid which the order of the procession through the aisles was formed, and the sight was altogether a most impressive one. The King's Boys, in their uniforms, and the Westminster School Boys, in their white surplices, two and two abreast, formed the van of the procession. The Abbey Choristers, robed in their robes of white and scarlet, together with the Choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral, Whitehall Chapel, and the various other important places of public worship throughout the metropolis, next followed; then followed the Peers, at the head of whom was his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex, and his Grace the Duke of Wellington, both in deep black, and exhibiting a star on the left breast; next in order were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Chichester, and various other Bishops; after them followed the Dean and Chapter of Westminster, then the Rev. Dr. Holcombe, accompanied by the Rev. Dr. Deakins; next to them the coffin and distinguished pall bearers; and lastly, the members of the House of Commons, two and two abreast. During all this time, the Abbey bell tolled slowly and solemnly; and the procession having been arranged, the signal to advance was given. The organ here commenced its melancholy and devotional funeral notes, the Choristers chiming in with a sweetness

and solemnity of voice, producing, as the sounds travelled from aisle to aisle, the deepest feeling that the presence of man's mortality and immortality can inspire. The Choristers, as the procession moved towards the north transept of the Abbey, where the grave was formed, close to the tombs of Canning, Fox and Pitt, chanted the funeral dirge composed by Croft. Having arrived at the grave, the coffin was lowered into it, and the funeral service was most impressively read by the Rev. Dr. Holcombe, the Choristers, King's Boys, &c. chanting in occasionally, with the accompaniment of the organ. During this most solemn part of the service, their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Sussex and Gloucester, the Duke of Wellington, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Chichester, and the various other Bishops, the Lord Chancellor, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the other Pall Bearers, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord Rosslyn, Lord Althorp, Lord Auckland, &c. formed a circle around the grave.

Among the most distinguished Commoners present, besides those already mentioned, we observed Sir James Graham, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Morpeth, Mr. Fowel Buxton, Dr. Lushington, Mr. Stanley, Mr. Lyttleton, Sir Robert Grant, Mr. Spring Rice, the Messrs. Attwood, Messrs. James and Henry Grattan, Mr. Tynte, Mr. Carew O'Dwyer, &c. &c.

Besides the above, the Abbey was crowded by persons of distinction, among whom were many ladies.

After the funeral service was over, the numerous persons pressed eagerly towards the grave, to get a sight of the coffin, which was covered with rich black velvet,

and ornamented with gilt moulding, heading, &c. In the centre of the lid was a splendid brass plate of considerable dimensions, with the following simple inscription:

"WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq.
Born 24th of August, 1759;
Died 29th of July, 1833.

Thus terminated the mortal career of as pure and virtuous a public man as ever lived—of "a man whom (in the words of Ben Johnson) no sordid hope of gain, or frosty apprehension of danger, could make a parasite to time, or place, or opinion."

Mr. Wilberforce's public life forms one of the brightest pages in the annals of this country, so long renowned among the nations of the earth. By his exertions in the Senate, the heart of the nation was first impressed with the horror and degradation of its long-cherished traffic in human beings. His glowing eloquence inspired in others the feelings of humanity in which it had its source, and he had the glory of witnessing the triumph of that holy cause to which he had devoted all the energies of his gifted mind, in the deliverance of his country from the abomination of the slave trade—a consummation well characterized by one of his ablest coadjutors as "the saving of the soul of the nation." A delicate constitution compelled him to retire from parliament and public life some years ago, which deprived the cause of humanity of his personal exertions in the total extinction of slavery; but the feelings he mainly contributed to inspire can never die; and the people of this country, while they honor the name of Wilberforce, will feel

their own highest honor in imitating the conduct of him whose benevolence, founded on the sincerest piety, regarded the whole human race as friends and brothers.

The funeral ceremony did not terminate before three o'clock. We may here mention that we saw two gentlemen of color in the procession, who appeared to feel a deep interest in the solemnity of the passing scene.

As many of the readers of the first edition of this memoir have expressed their regret at the omission, by the author, of the celebrated "Protest," first communicated to the London Christian Advocate by Mr. Garrison, in July, 1833, we have concluded to insert it in this place. It will be seen that the name of Wilberforce stands at the head of its distinguished subscribers. The affixing it was his last public effort in the African cause, having occurred a few weeks previous to his decease.

PROTEST.

We, the undersigned, having observed with regret that the "American Colonization Society" appears to be gaining some adherents in this country, are desirous to express our opinions respecting it.

Our motives and excuse for thus coming forward are the claims which the Society has put forth to *anti-slavery* support. These claims are, in our opinion, wholly

groundless; and we feel bound to affirm that our deliberate judgment and conviction are, that the professions made by the Colonization Society of promoting the abolition of slavery, are altogether delusive.

As far as the mere colony of Liberia is concerned, it has, no doubt, the advantages of other trading establishments. In this sense, it is beneficial both to America and to Africa; and we cordially wish it well. We cannot, however, refrain from expressing our strong opinion that it is a settlement of which the United States ought to bear the whole cost. We never required of that country to assist us in Sierra Leone. We are enormously burdened by our own connection with slavery; and we do maintain that we ought not to be called on to contribute to the expenses of a colony which, though no doubt comprising some advantages, was formed chiefly to indulge the prejudices of American slaveholders, and which is regarded with aversion by the colored population of the United States.

With regard to the extinction of the slave-trade, we apprehend that Liberia, however good the intentions of its supporters, will be able to do little or nothing towards it, except on the limited extent of its own territories. The only effectual death-blow to that accursed traffic will be the destruction of slavery throughout the world. To the destruction of slavery throughout the world, we are compelled to say that we believe the Colonization Society *to be an obstruction.*

Our objections to it are briefly these:—While we believe its pretexts to be delusive, we are convinced that its *real* effects are of the most dangerous nature. It takes its root from a cruel prejudice and alienation in

the whites of America against the colored people, slave or free. This being its source, the effects are what might be expected—that it fosters and increases the spirit of caste, already so unhappily predominant—that it widens the breach between the two races, exposes the colored people to great practical persecution, in order to *force* them to emigrate, and finally, is calculated to swallow up and divert that feeling which America, as a christian and a free country, cannot but entertain, that slavery is alike incompatible with the law of God and with the well-being of man, whether of the enslaver or the enslaved.

On these grounds, therefore, and while we acknowledge the colony of Liberia, or any other colony on the coast of Africa, to be *in itself* a good thing, we must be understood utterly to repudiate the principles of the American Colonization Society. The Society is, in our estimation, not deserving of the countenance of the British public.

Wm. Wilberforce,
Wm. Smith,
Zachary Macaulay,
William Evans, M. P.
Samuel Gurney,
George Stephen,
Suffield,
S. Lushington, M. P.
Thos. F. Buxton, M. P.
James Cropper,
William Allen,
Dan. O'Connel, M. P.

London, July, 1833.

ANECDOTE OF MR. WILBERFORCE.

A few years ago, the late Mr. Wilberforce was engaged, at the committee of the African Institution, in a discussion with the present Chancellor, and some other members, upon a point that involved the necessity of a conference with the Minister. The duty of calling upon him was, of course, imposed on Mr. Wilberforce; but it was a habit which he had acquired by a constant interruption of visiters, to defer all matters not immediately pressing, to a leisure hour that seldom arrived. Brougham, aware of this, urged upon him to seek the interview without delay; the committee being assembled in the adjoining street to the official residence. Mr. Wilberforce, however, had already become entangled in conversation with others; and Brougham, finding his efforts ineffectual, seated himself at the table, and hastily wrote a letter, which he handed over to Mr. Wilberforce to sign. "That," said he, "will settle the matter without more trouble." But the veteran senator was not so confiding in the learned Lord's address, as was expected. He read the proposed epistle with unusual caution; and, returning it to its author, emphatically quoted the patriarch's words,—"The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hand is the hand of Esau!" A more felicitous quotation, in reference to the political characters of both parties, as well as to its immediate application, cannot well be conceived; but even Brougham could not rival this illustrious man in a pointed yet courteous repartee.

SONNET.

WRITTEN BY COWPER IN 1792.

Thy country, Wilberforce, with just disdain,
  Hears thee by cruel men and impious called
  Fanatic, for thy zeal to loose th' enthralled
From exile, public sale, and slavery's chain.
  Friend of the poor, the wronged, the fetter-galled,
Fear not lest labor such as thine be vain.
  Thou has achieved a part; hast gained the ear
Of Britain's senate to thy glorious cause;
Hope smiles, joy springs; and though cold caution pause,
  And weave delay, the better hour is near
  That shall remunerate thy toils severe,
By peace for Afric, fenced with British laws.
Enjoy what thou has won, esteem and love
From all the just on earth, and all the blest above.

DEATH OF WILBERFORCE.

BY MRS. SIGOURNEY.

I heard loud praise of heroes. But I saw
The blood-stain on their tablet. Then I marked
A torrent rushing from its mountain height,
Bearing the up-torn laurel, while its strength
Amid the arid sands of Vanity

Did spend itself—and lo! a warning voice
Sighed o'er the Ocean of Eternity,
"*Behold the Warrior's glory.*"

History came,
Sublimely soaring on her wing of light,
And many a name of palatine and peer,
Monarch and prince, on her proud scroll she bore,
Blazoned by Fame. But 'mid the sea of Time,
Helmet, and coronet, and diadem,
Rose boastful up and shone and disappeared,
Like the white foam-crest on the tossing wave,
Forgotten, while beheld.

I heard a knell
Toll slow amid the consecrated aisles
Where slumber England's dead,—a solemn dirge
Break forth amid the tombs of kings, and say
That man was dust. And then a nation's tears
Fell down like rain; for it was meet to mourn.
But from the land of palm-trees, where doth flow
Sweet incense forth, from grove, and gum, and flower,
Came richer tribute, breathing o'er the tomb
A prostrate nation's thanks.

Yes—Afric knelt,—
That mourning mother, and, throughout the earth
Taught her unfettered children to repeat
The name of WILBERFORCE, and bless the spot
Made sacred by his ashes. Yea, the world
Arose upon her crumbling throne, to praise
The lofty mind that never knew to swerve,
Though holy Truth should beckon it to meet
The frown of the embattled universe.

And so I bowed me down in this far nook
Of the far West, and proudly traced the name
Of WILBERFORCE upon my country's scroll,
To be her guide as she unchained the slave,
And the bright model of her sons, who seek
True glory. And, from every village haunt
And school, where rustic Science quaintly reigns,
I called the little ones, and forth they came,
To hear of Afric's champion, and to bless
The firm in purpose, and the full of days.

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